

FOURFOLD SATISFACTION**NO. 2726****A SERMON****INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 12, 1901****DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON****AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON****ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 4, 1880**

*“And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness,
and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD....
For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.”
Jeremiah 31:14, 25*

THE subject of this morning [Sermon #1549, Good News for Thirsty Souls] was spiritual thirst and the promises made thereto. I tried to encourage those who are not at rest concerning the state of their souls—those who have strong and ardent desires to escape from the wrath to come—I tried to encourage them to partake of Christ, by faith, that they might find peace of heart and so might be perfectly satisfied. I believe that some did find peace this morning. We shall be on the look-out for them and hope that they will speedily come and tell us what God has done for their souls.

But on this occasion our subject is the very opposite of that of this morning. It is neither thirst nor hunger, but perfect satisfaction, not strength of agonizing desire, but rest of holy satiety of which I am about to speak, in the earnest hope that all of you who are believers in our Lord Jesus Christ may enjoy this perfect satisfaction even at this very hour. There are four forms of satisfaction described in the four sentences of the two verses which form our text.

I. The first is GOD'S SERVANTS ARE SATISFIED WITH THE APPOINTED SACRIFICE. Read the first sentence of verse fourteen, “I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness.”

God's people are His children, but they are also His servants. And their service, viewed from one special point, is that of priests. Christ has made all of us who believe in Him to be kings and priests unto our God. It is the business of every Christian man to be a priest. There is now no special order of priests now, apart from the general body of believers in Christ. We regard the use of the term “priests” as relating to any other persons as utterly misleading and untrue.

Every man who is a Christian is a priest unto God and he daily offers unto God the acceptable sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving. In fact, his whole life should be a sacrifice—his ordinary garments should be his priestly vestments—and wherever he is, the place should be a temple for God's worship. His own house and every room in it should be consecrated to the Lord's service. And every action of his life should be the act of one who is holy unto the Lord and who does everything with a view to the glory of God.

Priests, of course, must have a sacrifice and it is the special privilege of the priests of God that they shall be satisfied by eating the fat of that sacrifice. If you read, when you are at home, in the seventh chapter of the Book of Leviticus, you will find that the Aaronic priests were forbidden to eat the fat of the sacrifice. And in fact, to eat any portion of the fat of a beast that had been sacrificed to God was a crime that was punishable with death.

There were certain portions of the sacrificial animals that were allotted to the priests, but all that was described as “the fat thereof” was for God, and for God alone, so that, under the Jewish dispensation, the priest could never be satisfied with fatness. But Christ has made us priests after another order than that of Aaron—and the richest part of the sacrifice, the very fat of it—is ours to feed upon now.

Dear brethren, what is the sacrifice of which we speak today, but the Lord Jesus Christ? We know of no other atoning sacrifice but the blessed person, body, soul, spirit, and blood of Jesus Christ, our incarnate God and Savior. It is with this sacrifice that believers are perfectly satisfied.

First, *we are satisfied with Christ as our sin-offering*. Brethren, He did really take upon Himself our sin and He did make an end of it upon the cross. Believing in Christ Jesus, we have no more consciousness of sin so far as its guilt is concerned. A thing cannot be in two places at one time. When Christ took our sins, we had not one of them left. We were clear of them, in God's sight, the moment that Christ became our Substitute.

And when, by faith, we laid our hand on that dear head of His and made confession of our transgression, we received the personal assurance that our sin was made to meet upon Him more than eighteen hundred years ago. When He was nailed to the accursed tree, without the gate, He presented a sin-offering for our sake and that one offering was effectual, for by it He has fulfilled the great prophecy concerning Messiah the Prince, "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness."

Brethren, you believe this great truth, I know you do, but are you satisfied with it? If you are not, you ought to be, for what better fount of cleansing can you desire than the precious blood of Christ? What better way of atonement do you need than that Christ should bear the wrath of God for you—that He should take your sin and hurl it into the depths of the sea where it can never be found again? When He had done this, he cried, "It is finished." And it was finished forever—so are you not perfectly satisfied with Christ as your sin-offering?

Next, *we are satisfied with Christ as our burnt-offering*. Under that aspect also, He was well-pleasing to God. Man was bound to bring to God a perfect obedience which should please his Maker. By himself, man could never do this. But Christ has done it, and you and I who believe in Him are perfectly satisfied that God is well-pleased with Him, and also well-pleased with us who are representatively in Him.

By faith, wrapped in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, with His finished work imputed to us and His perfect robe covering us as with raiment of wrought gold, we do believe that we are beautiful in the sight of God, "accepted in the beloved," so that He can use His words to the spouse in the Canticles and say to us, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." If you believe this and have really a firm grip of it, you are perfectly satisfied with Christ as your justifying righteousness, the burnt-offering with which God is well-pleased so that He smells in it a savor of rest.

There was another offering, called the peace-offering, in which the worshipper partook with God of the sacrifice in token of complete reconciliation between God and the sinner. Are you not *perfectly satisfied with Christ as your peace-offering*? You feed upon Him and God feeds upon Him, and therefore, you feel yourself to be at perfect peace with God, do you not?

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Have you that peace, beloved? If you are looking to Christ alone as your Savior, I know that you do feel within you that deep "peace of God, which passeth all understanding," which does "keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Do you want any better peace with God than Christ has made? Do you want any better reconciliation than Christ has accomplished? I know you do not and you can, at this moment, from your inmost soul say, "God has satisfied my soul with the sacrifice of His dear Son. The fatness of that sacrifice has filled me and I am delighted with it. Christ has put away all my sin. He has made me acceptable unto God. He has given me the enjoyment of peace with God and communion with Him. Now am I fully contented."

Dear brothers and sisters, when a man truly lays hold of Christ, he gets fully satisfied. People come to us and say, "Why don't you take up the modern-thought doctrines? Why don't you study the new theories that so many have accepted?" Well, the reason is that when we have the best object for our faith that we can ever get, we feel as if that was quite good enough for us. We cannot imagine anything that could give such rest to our entire nature as a belief in Christ has done.

If you can really prove to us that there is something better, we are not fools, and we shall be quite willing to accept it—but we greatly question whether you will ever bring us to your way of thinking, for this Christ of ours, in whom we have believed, is so good, and great, and gracious, and glorious, that He fills and overfills us, and we do not see what more we could ever want or have.

Oh! how long was my mind in bitter anguish till I came to eat the fat of Christ's sacrifice. And when I trusted in Him as my Substitute, He at once satisfied the demands of my intellect. I seemed to think that it was the most glorious invention possible even to God that Christ should die, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

Then I understood how God could be justified and yet be the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus—how He could pardon me and yet punish my sin—how there should be no violation of His justice and yet no limitation of His mercy, because Christ stepped in and paid all my debt, so that it was justly as well as mercifully struck out from the record of God. There are some very great intellects in the world—no doubt there are much greater ones than mine—but as far as mine is concerned, that doctrine of Christ's substitution perfectly satisfies me.

Words fail me when I try to tell you how fully this truth also satisfies my conscience. My conscience, burdened, troubled, and perplexed when it was once aroused, used to plague me day and night. I said to myself, "If God does not punish me for my sins, He ought to do so." I could not believe in any love of God that did not punish my sin.

But when I saw that He bade His sword awake against His own dear Son who stood in my stead—when I saw that He was too just to wink at sin and pass by transgression, but visited it upon a willing Substitute—blessed be His name, then my conscience found a place of perfect rest. I felt that I could love God and trust God, because He had not winked at sin, but had punished it, in the person of His dear Son, on my behalf. Oh, this fat of the sacrifice satisfies God's servants as to their conscience!

And now it also satisfies my affections. And it will satisfy yours, dear friend, if you trust to it. You want somebody to love—everybody does. You cannot go through the world simply living inside your own ribs. You must live in somebody's heart and if you give your heart altogether to any human being, you will be disappointed.

But oh! when you love Christ with all your heart—when you live wholly for Him, then you have something that fills your heart right up. Here your love can rest. It can roost and build its nest in the wounds of Jesus. There is nothing that can fill the affections of any one of us like the dear person of our suffering Lord.

And I am sure that He also satisfies all our hopes. Large as they may be, there is enough in Christ fully to gratify them. And as for our fears, He fills them up so that we seem to have nothing to fear. "If God be for us," in Christ, "who can be against us?" If Christ has died for us, who is he that condemns us? And what is there that can now separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

Oh, if you would all but try this blessed plan of believing in Jesus as the Lamb of God slain for your sin—if you would but eat the fat of this great sacrifice—you also would prove the truth of the first sentence of our text, "I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness." In that way, you would have all you could take in and a great deal more than all you want.

II. Now let us turn to the second sentence of our text. "My people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD." This teaches us that AS GOD'S PEOPLE, WE ARE SATISFIED WITH GOD'S GOODNESS.

All through my discourse, I shall be appealing to you, dear friends, and asking you whether it is not as I say. Come now, beloved, you who are the Lord's people, I want to ask you a few questions concerning His goodness to you.

First, *are you satisfied with God's eternal purposes?* Your names are written in His book of life, He chose you from eternity to be His. Before the torch of light had kindled the first shining orb, He had looked upon you with prescient eye and loved you. You are satisfied about that great truth, I hope—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

“Satisfied?” did I say? That word seems scarcely good enough. Sit down and turn over in your mind this eternal love of God and you will feel such delight within your soul, if you feel as I do, that you will soon have tears streaming down your cheeks for very joy as you sing,—

*“Loved of my God, for Him again
With love intense I burn:
Chosen of Thee ere time began,
I choose Thee in return.”*

Well, now, out of that eternal love comes *adoption into God’s family*. Taking us out of the family of the prince of darkness, He has made us His own sons and daughters. Are you satisfied with that adoption? Do you want any higher honor than to be a child of God? For, “if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”

Earthly sovereigns are accustomed to confer titles of nobility upon certain of their subjects. I suppose there is something in the honor, though not much. But when God makes a man His child, He puts him among the princes of the blood royal of heaven, the imperial family of the skies. The peerages of heaven are so glorious that all the nobilities of earth sink into utter insignificance in comparison with them.

You, poor man, and you, humble woman, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, are allied to the God that made heaven and earth. You have been admitted distinctly into the one divinely royal family of the universe. Are you not satisfied with this honor? You should be, indeed, more than satisfied with this goodness of the Lord.

Well, now, since you have become the subject of this adoption, *all God’s dealings with you have been the dealings of a Father*. He treats you now as His sons. Perhaps, at the present moment, you do not feel quite satisfied with God’s dealings with you. But if you are in a right spirit, you will be. It may be that God has stripped you of your wealth and pulled you down from the high places you once occupied—you now stand in a very lowly position compared with that which you once filled.

Yet, beloved, if faith be in active exercise, you will say concerning the Lord’s dealings with you, “What pleases Him, pleases me. Whether He lifts me up, or casts me down, since He does it out of fatherly love and makes all things work for my good, I will be satisfied with whatever He does, for it is all goodness, and it is written, ‘My people shall be satisfied with my goodness.’”

O dear friends, this is a happy state of mind to be in, to be content with all that happens to us—to have done with wishing for any alteration in God’s dealings with us—to be satisfied with whatever He gives and just as satisfied when He withholds—to be even as a weaned child, crying no more after this poor world, but giving yourself up entirely to your loving Father’s care!

May God grant to each one of you this privilege of being perfectly satisfied with His providential dealings with you! You will be a very naughty child if you are not—and you will bring upon yourself a heap of trouble if you kick against what God has done. It will cost you more pain to rebel against God’s will than that will ever can cause you if you yield to it.

Are you not also *satisfied with the goodness of God in His promises*? Take your Bible—is it not a galaxy of stars—every one of them infinitely more precious than the whole of the wealth of this world? All that you need for time and for eternity is included in the promises of God’s Word.

*“What more can He say than to you He has said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?”*

I am quite sure that you are also *satisfied with your prospects*. Why, I think, that you will each one say, “I am infinitely more than satisfied with the prospect before me. It is too bright, too good, too glorious.” I am sure that God’s people, when they are in a right state of heart, are so satisfied with His goodness that they do not wish for anything more.

They can hardly conceive of more than God has prepared for them that love Him. Let me but have God's goodness and all may be as God wills. Only grant me Your favor, O my God, and I will make no choice of continent or climate, of poverty or wealth, of sickness or health, of time to live or time to die. If I have Your goodness, all else is but a trifle.

God's people show that they are satisfied with God's goodness for they have no wish to change it for anything else. They would not give up their God if all the kingdoms of the world could be delivered over to them—they do not desire anything better for their children than God's goodness. When you, who are parents, think of your dear ones growing up around you, you are naturally anxious about their prospects. If you did but know that they were all the Lord's children, you would say, "We really care for nothing more than that. Their fortune is made when once their father's God has become their God."

This spirit of resignation makes you content to wait here below, whether it is threescore years and ten, or fourscore years, or less, or more. That question will not trouble you so long as God's goodness follows you. And this satisfaction also makes you happy in the thought of departure out of this world—not impatient, but still expectant, hoping for the day soon to come when, borne on wings sublime, you shall leave behind you all the fret and care of this poor undeveloped life, and shall enter into the glory where your spirit shall expand itself in the full light of God and you shall know what God has prepared for them that love Him.

III. I can only speak very briefly upon the third sentence of our text, which is found in the twenty-fifth verse. "I have satiated the weary soul." THIS SATISFACTION IS MEANT FOR WEARY PILGRIMS.

First, *they are to be satisfied with divine refreshments*. Was it not so with you, beloved, when you started on the heavenly pilgrimage? I should like to recall to you, my brothers and sisters, that memorable day when first you knew the Lord. In my own case, I can testify that I was very heavy of heart and very weary in spirit. Often did Satan tempt me to give up seeking rest, for I had sought so long in vain. I had attended the ordinances of God's house, and used the means of grace with great diligence, yet I think I was none the better, but rather grew worse.

But the moment that I looked to Christ upon the cross—the very instant I understood that all I had to do was to look unto Him and be saved—truly He had satiated my weary soul. I could have danced for joy, or shouted "Hallelujah!" at that moment. And by the hour together my spirit was singing, "Praise the Lord!" I did not know how to express my delight sufficiently.

You recollect that time yourselves, do you not, when the Lord satiated your weary soul? He had given you all that your soul could feed upon and a great deal more. You were like a mouse that gets into a dairy full of cheese—you knew that you could not eat it all, you seemed to bury yourself in the fatness and fullness of the Lord's mercy.

There was no hope that you would be able to take it all in. It was so with me, I know. I felt like a little fish in the Atlantic, swimming where I pleased—above, beneath, around on all sides, there was an infinity of delight that much more than filled my soul. That is what the Lord does for us when we begin to trust in Jesus. How has it been with us since then?

Well, brethren, I for one testify that *He has continued to revive us*. We have often been weary since those early days. Sometimes, weary in the Lord's service, though never weary of it. We have been wearied with pain. We have been wearied with trials. We have been wearied with doubts and fears. We have been wearied with the assaults of Satan. We have been wearied with the unkindness of men and weary in a great many ways.

But oh! whenever we have come to Christ, how speedily He has satiated our weary soul! We could laugh at opposition then. We could cheerfully take up our heaviest cross and find it light as a feather. And we marched onward singing—

*"In darkest shades if He appear,
My dawning is begun;*

*He is my soul's sweet morning star,
And He my rising sun."*

Perhaps our greatest weariness is weariness of ourselves. The one person that troubles me most is the one from whom I cannot get away as long as I am here. There is, I expect, a troublesome fellow who worries and bothers you a great deal—that is, your own self. Well, dear friend, when you are weary of self, you will find it a blessed thing just to look away to Christ and say, “Lord, I am empty, but You are my fullness. I am weakness itself, but You are my strength. I am a mass of sin and misery, but You are my righteousness and my salvation. I am less than nothing, but You are all in all to me.” It is when we are most sick of self that we are most fond of our Savior—and it is when we get most weary of sinning that we find the sweetest repose in our sin-conquering Redeemer.

So, you see, there is perfect satisfaction for weary souls, and well there may be, for look, you weary ones, and see what you have to give you this satisfaction. God the Father is yours, to be your Father. God the Son is yours, to be your Husband, your Head. God the Holy Ghost is yours, to be your Comforter, your perpetual Indweller.

“All things are yours....the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” The covenant, in which the “all things” are wrapped up, is yours, for He has made with you “an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” Heaven is yours, with its golden streets, its green inviting fields, its endless glories, its boundless bliss—all is yours.

Are you not satisfied, O poor weary one? Throw yourself down upon the couch of God’s goodness and take your fill of rest, for this is the rest, and this is the refreshing, and “so he giveth his beloved sleep.”

IV. The last sentence of our text can only just be touched upon. It speaks of SATISFACTION FOR MOURNERS. “I have replenished every sorrowful soul.”

There are plenty of sorrowful souls about and no doubt, there are many in this congregation. As we look into their faces, they appear tolerably cheerful, but “the heart knoweth his own bitterness.” There are some of us who are, at times, very heavy of heart—but when we do wear sackcloth, we always wear it next to our skin.

I can speak for myself upon that matter. I do not like to wear sackcloth outside for everybody to see, because if we do that, we make other people wear it, too, for we set a fashion of mourning, and this is our Lord’s command, “When ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”

But now, where are you, sorrowful ones? Here is satisfaction for you, whatever may be the cause of your weeping and grieving. *Are you sorrowing about past sin?* Well, the Lord has given you perfect satisfaction concerning that matter, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, for He tells you that He has put away all your iniquity—“I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins.”

“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” You need not be downcast concerning the sins that God tells you have ceased to be. Remember that wonderful declaration in Jeremiah 50:20, “In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.”

Perhaps you are *sorrowful about inbred sin*. You grieve because you cannot live as you would like to live. That is a blessed kind of sorrow. All God’s servants have to fight with inward corruption, more or less, and it often makes us cry with the apostle, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from

the body of this death?" But do not stop at that question—go on to say with Paul, on another occasion, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Your inward sins will all be conquered. There is not one Canaanite in the land who will not be destroyed by the power of your glorious Joshua, Jesus, who is leading you on to the battle. You shall be perfect one day, before the presence of God, with exceeding joy, you shall be presented, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

Perhaps, however, some of you may be *sorrowing because of your present troubles*. Then the Lord comforts you by telling you that your troubles are working for your lasting good. I should like to bear my own witness to the Lord's goodness to me and I desire to bless Him as much for the cups full of bitterness as for the chalices of sweet delight. And I really and honestly believe that, of the two, I have gained more by affliction than by joy.

And I have more reason to praise God, at this moment, for deep depression and heart sorrow than for all the joys I have ever known, with but one exception, that is, the joy of believing in Christ and having fellowship with Him. Put all earthly enjoyments together and I do not think that they are worthy to be compared with the benefit of sanctified sorrow

There may be some of you who are *sorrowing because of dear children whom you have lost*. The text says, "I have replenished every sorrowful soul" so that you must not sorrow over these dear ones who have died, especially after you have read in this chapter about God comforting Rachel concerning her slain children.

You know how the innocents were murdered at Bethlehem by the cruel Herod and Rachel mourned for them in this prophetic lamentation. But the Lord said to her, "They shall come again from the land of the enemy." It is a high honor to be the mother of a child in heaven. It is something still higher to be mother to many sweet little ones who have gone on before you and who are singing up there an everlasting song of praise unto the King.

It is a wondrous joy to be the father of those who, day and night, wait upon God in heaven and see His face, and serve Him evermore. So be not sad or downcast if that is your case. As for all who die in the Lord, we sorrow not as those who are without hope. There will be blessed meetings, by and by. You look back, with great sorrow, to the loss of a dear husband, wife, brother, sister, father, mother—yes, but you know where they are and you have the blessed assurance that you shall meet them again in the day when the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised—and you with them shall form an unbroken family around the throne of God in heaven.

What is your sorrow, dear friend? I will not stop to go into any further particulars, but whatsoever it may be, there is grace stored up in Christ sufficient to take all your sorrow away. Come, aching head, lay yourself down upon the bosom of the loving Jesus. Come, weary heart, lean your whole weight upon His wounded side. Come, child of God with the sad countenance, and the red eyes of sorrow, look to the Man of sorrows, grief's close acquaintance, and learn from Him where the river of salvation perpetually flows. If the Lord will but reveal Himself to you, you will want no other consolation, for He is Himself the Consolation of Israel.

Some of you may not come to this place many more times. Perhaps you are getting old and very feeble. Well, suppose you never come again—we shall be sorry to miss you if we ourselves remain, but you will not be sorry to be "for ever with the Lord." You are going from good to better and from better to best.

And what will the best be? If, at the Lord's table down here, you have sometimes had such raptures that you hardly knew how to bear the joy—and I know that you have had such bliss—what will it be to see your Savior face to face and to be forever with Him where you can never grieve Him again, and where He will pour out all the love that is in His heart into your glorified spirit?

All that may happen to you within a week, within an hour, within a moment. Nobody knows how near we are to the King's pearly gate, so let us not sorrow too much, nor be too much cast down. Hark to

the music of the golden harps—they are ringing out so sweetly that if we could but open these ears of ours a little more, we might catch at least some stray notes from the everlasting harmonies.

Some of you are nearer to heaven than you think you are. If these eyes could but be opened, or be taken away altogether, so that the spirit might see without the hindrance of these poor dim glasses, what a sight it would be! The jeweled city, with its twelve foundations all formed of precious stones—and the eternal light shining out of it from the face of God and the Lamb, for no other light is needed there.

“What must it be to be there?”

Just think that we may be there within the next ten minutes and this thought should make us bear without a sigh the sorrows of the present moment, whatever they may be.

“The road may be rough, but it cannot be long,”

so let us—

“Smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song;”

and God be with us evermore, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JEREMIAH 31:1-26

Verses 1-3. *At the same time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. Thus saith the LORD, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest. The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.*

Was there ever a sweeter word from heaven than this—everlasting love proved by the drawings of divine grace? I know that your hearts will be full of music if ever the Spirit of God has spoken home to your soul such a message as this. Let us read it again. “The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”

4-5. *Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry. Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things.*

God has kind purposes of love towards His ancient people and He will yet bring Israel again to her own land. And spiritually, He has like purposes of love to all His elect. And they shall joy and rejoice with unspeakable delight. What if you are barren for a while? God shall yet come to you and you shall be fruitful.

6-9. *For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God. For thus saith the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.*

Do not forget the first meaning of this passage in its reference to Israel, but suck in also the consolation which comes from it to all who are believers in Christ. The Lord will certainly bring all His chosen ones to Himself. Blind as they are—wandering as they have been—they shall come back to Him.

They shall come back with tears of repentance and with refreshments of mercy: “by the rivers of water.” They shall come back to their God, who says, “I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.”

10-11. *Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.*

Redemption lies at the bottom of every favor that we receive from God. He blesses us because He has redeemed us. He has bought us with so great a price that we are too dear for Him to ever lose us. Because He has bought His flock, therefore will He fetch it away from the enemy.

12-14. *Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD.*

Why, these very words are full of marrow and fatness! The promise is inexpressibly sweet. What must the fulfillment of it be? Oh, for faith to lay hold upon it!

Yet there is a note of sorrow mingled with the pealing of the joy-bells—

15-16. *Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.*

“Your lost babes shall live—their very bodies, moldering in the earth, shall rise again. Be not grieved or vexed overmuch, for, ‘they shall come again from the land of the enemy.’”

17. *And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border.*

There is another sorrow—a deeper sorrow than grief over children, that is, sorrow for sin—

18. *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised,*

And that was the end of it,

18. *As a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke:*

Since Your chastisements have been of little service to me, lay Your hand upon me—

18-19. *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented;*

Repentance is a turning from sin unto the Lord.

19. *And after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh:*

In very grief of heart, as if I could not smite myself enough for having sinned.

19. *I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.*

Now when a man talks like that, how does God speak?

20. *Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still:*

“Not only do I remember him, but ‘I do earnestly remember him still.’”

20. *Therefore my bowels are troubled for him;*

“I cannot bear to see his misery.”

20. *I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD.*

Oh, what blessedness there is in this gracious promise!

21-26. *Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities. How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech*

in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.

I should think it was. If a man could dream like that, he might well wish to go to sleep again. To dream of everlasting love, of gracious drawings, of heavenly restorations, of sin forgiven, sorrow removed, and desire satisfied, well may the prophet say, “My sleep was sweet unto me.” May we, when we are awake, learn what the prophet heard in his sleep!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—774, 801, 746

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